

Massachusetts *Minuteman* MAGAZINE



**Sergeant
Audie Murphy
Club Inductee**

Spring 2008

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On the Cover

Sgt. Daniel Regan was recently inducted into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club while serving in Iraq. Photo: Courtesy of Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment

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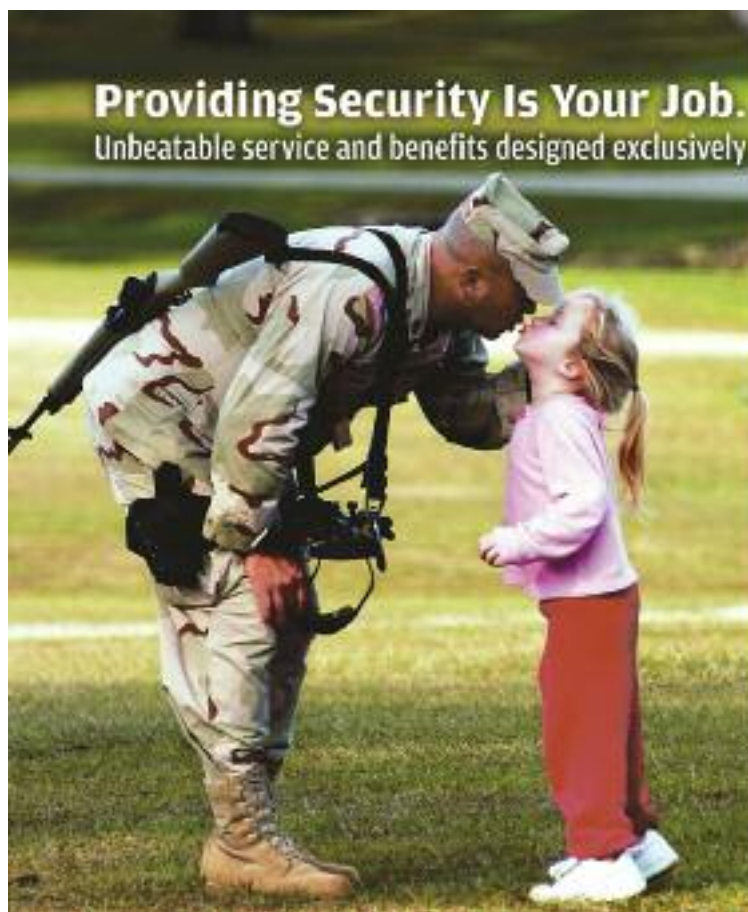


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Command Message

Telling the Massachusetts National Guard Story



Lt. Col. Paul M. Landry, director of Public Affairs, Massachusetts National Guard.

By Lt. Col. Paul M. Landry, Director of Public Affairs

I'm continually amazed by the day-to-day accomplishments of the men and women of the Massachusetts National Guard. Whether they are forward deployed or at home, our Soldiers and Airmen are providing a valuable service to the country and to the commonwealth.

We owe it to them to tell their stories. I know that unit commanders already have enough to do, so that's where the Unit Public Affairs Representative program comes in handy. Commanders at all levels should appoint a UPAR to provide public recognition to individual Soldiers and Airmen, or unit accomplishments.

The UPAR plays a key role in telling the Massachusetts Guard story, and can be an asset to a unit commander. Working in conjunction with the Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs Office, stories and photos can

be published in local newspapers, on the Web, in the Minuteman Dispatch (weekly e-mails), the Minuteman Magazine and several other local or national print or broadcast media.

Ask yourself the following: How many members of your unit were promoted in the last six months? How many of your Soldiers or Airmen received an award? Did your unit take part in a competition or conduct a unique training exercise?

Now ask yourself: Did we take any photos to document the event? How many hometown news releases were sent out?

The media is more than willing to write stories about Guardsman, but who is telling them about our accomplishments? If we don't than no one will. For more information, call Public Affairs at (508) 233-6562. ★

Staff Sgt. Kearns, Airman of the Year 2007

By Staff Sgt. Jerome White, 104th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

Amid all the Airmen in the Massachusetts Air National Guard, one stands out as the best. Newly promoted Staff Sgt. Michael Kearns was selected as the Airman of the Year for 2007.

Kearns, a 25-year-old native of West Springfield, joined the Air National Guard four years ago. Since joining, he has established himself as a razor-sharp troop, who has been involved with many projects at the base.

For Kearns, the decision to enlist was easy. "I used to mountain bike on that little mountain range (behind the base) and watch the air shows," he said. "I always knew that (Barnes) was where I wanted to be."

Although he admits that the available college benefits and friends here at Barnes played some part in his decision to enlist, the real motivator was the camaraderie and sense of family those at Barnes enjoy.

Kearns quickly became part of the 104th family and earned the distinctive nickname of "Shooter" from his co-workers, in that he resembles Christopher McDonald, who played the famed character "Shooter McGavin" in the movie Happy Gilmore.

In early 2007, Kearns volunteered to deploy in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom for four-and-half months. While there, he was responsible for providing maintenance to more than 1,100 aircraft that landed at the base. Kearns and other members of the base aided in the recovery of the Australian Prime Minister, after he and his entourage landed in a hostile area following an inflight emergency.

Kearns was also recognized for his volunteer activities with the Eagle Scout program as well as working with handicapped children at the Paul Newman sponsored "Hole in the Wall Gang" camp in Connecticut.

One of Kearns' long-term goals is to work at the 104th Fighter Wing full-time alongside the members he considers family.

Senior Master Sgt. Rob Roy, one of Kearns' supervisors, continues to be impressed by his effort. "Mike came to us as an Eagle Scout filled with motivation, and he has proved his value to this team, time and time again." ★



Staff Sgt. Mike Kearns trains on the newly assigned F-15s at Barnes Air National Guard base. Photo: Courtesy of 104th Fighter Wing

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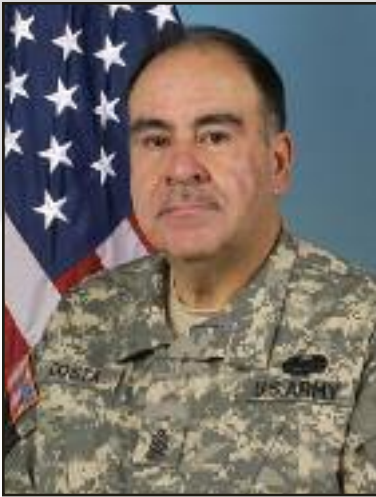
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Conversation with ...

State Command Sergeant Major Dave Costa



Q *Command Sergeant Major, I see the patch of the 1st Cavalry Division worn proudly on your right sleeve. Can you tell me about your military background, particularly your combat service?*

A I spent most of my first enlistment with cavalry units. The first with the 16th Cavalry assigned to Alaska. My second assignment and deployment was with the 1st Cavalry Division (Airmobile) in Vietnam. The division's primary mission was blocking avenues of approach

to Saigon from Cambodia. The senior leadership of the Army at that time consisted of both World War II and Korean War Veterans. It was an exceptionally well-led division. Later in my career, I was fortunate to serve during Desert Storm with the 772nd Military Police Co., in southern Iraq. And, in 2003, I was afforded the privilege to serve as task force sergeant major in Fallujah, Iraq, with Task Force Enforcer, formed by both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island National Guard.

The shoulder sleeve insignia-former wartime service, or "combat patch," is very important to me, as it should be to all Soldiers wearing one and those yet to wear one. The "combat patch" is not an individual award, it is an Army tradition and sign of respect. It shows respect to the Soldiers currently deployed, and respect to those fallen in all wars assigned to that unit. My former battalion was surrounded during the Korean War and was given orders to breakout. Some 250 wounded Soldiers could not be moved. Officers and noncommissioned officers, as well as the battalion chaplain, volunteered to stay with the wounded. Out of respect, I wear their patch. It is our yellow ribbon.

Q *As you settle into your new position as the State's Command Sergeant Major, what are your goals?*

A Maj. Gen. Carter and I both agreed that the position of command sergeant major is not merely an enlisted advisor. He has directed me to stay engaged in the enlisted promotion system, Soldier and Airman readiness, retention and equal opportunity. My immediate objective is to strengthen the NCO support chain. Command Sgt. Maj. Richard Belanger has been a tremendous amount of help with the battle handoff. I intend to seek his counsel continually over the next year.

Q *Looking back at your career, which assignment best prepared you for this position?*

A Attending the resident course at the sergeant major academy helped prepare me for this position. During the course, you spent months with other sergeants major and are lectured by the serving command sergeants major. Also, I was fortunate to serve with retired Command Sgt. Maj. John Stroschio, who mentored me as a first sergeant and battalion command sergeant major.

Q *Which issues and responsibilities do you feel will consume most of your time as State Command Sgt. Major?*

A The enlisted promotion system is always changing and is an issue which affects the majority of our Soldiers. Major changes have been recommended at the national level, which if adopted, will be a challenge to implement. Our responsibility to provide personnel support to deployed units is also high on the list, along with military occupational specialty and noncommissioned officer education qualifications, because both affect our readiness and draw on our limited funds.

Q *For the new Soldier, explain the duties and responsibilities of the State Command Sergeant Major. How available will your office be to young enlisted Soldiers and Airmen?*

A I hold the only position in the military with a sole function of serving Soldiers and Airmen. I am tasked with ensuring they are trained and equipped. I ensure they receive everything that is promised, authorized or directed for them ... that all regulations are applied to them equally and fairly. I am the watchdog if any of the above fails to happen, I am required to make it right. I am always available and I need the interaction with Soldiers and Airmen to do my job. Only with continual exposure to junior Soldiers and Airmen will I remain proficient in my duties.

Q *Describe your style of management. What are your techniques for handling the vast spectrum of information and ideas needed to understand in order to carry out your duties? What criteria do you expect to use for making tough decisions?*

A Soldiers I have served with have always described my leadership style as a "benevolent monarch." I haven't figured out yet if that is a compliment or not. The military is continually changing. We amend more regulations and directives than we make ... I'm going to focus only on the information that directly affects our Soldiers and Airmen. Other sergeants major at the national level get paid to adopt a new combat boot. I only care about how to get that better boot on the foot of my Soldiers and Airmen. When making a decision, I always ask: What decision affects the most Soldiers or Airmen in a positive way?

Q *Do you hope to launch any new initiatives during this assignment?*

A I have a number of initiatives which I hope are approved by The Adjutant General and supported by our Soldiers and Airmen. One of my goals is to reinforce the traditions and honors of the National Guard – the same way my officers and noncommissioned officers did for me. We have four Medal of Honor recipients and the Commonwealth named an airport after one of our most successful generals ... these individuals are not honored at any of our installations. There are no rooms, roads or buildings named after them. Only in our museum will you find any mention of them. I hope to pay them the respect they deserve. I am going to place a lot of emphasis on our ceremonial unit. I plan to support them as much as possible. They provide a tremendous service to our Soldiers, Airmen and veterans. With support from the Legislature, I wish to formally identify them as a Massachusetts Militia Unit. And, I hope the designation of the 54th Infantry is granted to them. I intend to request the Registry of Motor Vehicles update the appearance of our license plate with one identical to the veteran's plate. Where the word "veteran" is printed on that plate, the National Guard plate would have a sticker identifying the plate owner as a general officer, officer, NCO, Soldier or Airman. ★

Command Sgt. Major Costa serves as the 8th State Command Sgt. Major of Massachusetts.

Theater Immersion Training at Camp Edwards

Capt. Jerrime Oliver, Headquarters, Camp Edwards

You may have noticed the construction going on just off Connery Avenue as you enter the Massachusetts Military Reservation's Camp Edwards. Work is underway on the new Tactical Training Base. The TTB was designed to simulate a Forward Operating Base and will be an integral part of pre-mobilization training at Camp Edwards.

The TTB is part of a larger concept called theater immersion training. Theater immersion training places units into an environment comparable to the one that they may encounter in combat. It is designed to rapidly build combat-ready units led by competent, confident leaders and manned by battle-ready Soldiers who embody the Warrior Ethos. This training environment uses a multilevel approach providing a combat training experience replicating conditions in the theater of operation.

Theater immersion training requires the construction of TTBs, facilities for military operations in urban terrain (MOUT) training, and reconfiguration of standard firing ranges to accommodate ground assault convoy and MOUT training. We are working to accomplish all of these requirements at Camp Edwards.

The TTB is an individual military city largely made up of staged military camps, modular units and open field space. The entire city is designed to simulate military life in Iraq, Afghanistan or the Balkans. The Soldiers live in tents with modular units provided for shower and sink facilities. There is a computer lab set up in a modular unit, so Soldiers can e-mail their families. There is a modular "mayor's office" from which the commanding officer manages the TTB. The base will be surrounded by barriers filled with dirt and barbed wire, guard towers and entry control points.

*Aerial view of the tactical training base.
Photo: Massachusetts National Guard*



Empty towers stand guard over the ongoing construction of the tactical training base at Camp Edwards. Photo: Massachusetts National Guard



Surrounded by construction equipment, "tent city" is in its infant stage at Camp Edwards. Photo: Massachusetts National Guard



An aerial view shows the MOUT "city" in the foreground and the tactical training base in the background. Photo: Massachusetts National Guard

Entrance to the site will be from Frank Perkins Road through an entry control point. The ECP will be constructed of concrete barriers, concertina and Hesco Concertainer barriers (dirt filled wire and mesh containers). The design of the ECP will provide required sentry bunkers, traffic pattern layout, a vehicle search area and working entrance and exit gates.

Protecting the base perimeter will be a defensive wall constructed of a combination of concertina wire, concrete barriers and Hesco Concertainer barriers. The initial design will include seven guard towers based on standard design and material requirements.

Soldiers training at the base will live in a troop tent housing area capable of supporting more than 600 personnel. Initial requirements are for wooden tent pads to be replaced in the future with reinforced concrete pads, providing a 20' x 32' tent footprint.

At first, the site will be supported by portable self-contained outhouses on crushed stone, but will incorporate the future inclusion of working latrine/shower trailers to support troop numbers. There will also be an administrative area consisting of six, 20' x 32' wood-framed buildings resting on concrete foundations. A couple of larger 40' x 32' buildings will be used as a tactical operations center and battalion headquarters.

The design has accounted for the base's future needs of up to six additional 20' x 32' buildings to house a medical facility, mess facility, shoppette, fuel point, motor pool and Soldier support center.

Camp Edwards personnel and the construction team are working diligently to complete the TTB and make it available for training as soon as June 8, 2008.

Outside the TTB's wire, a contractor is building a replicated village for MOUT training in order to enhance the combat training environment. The MOUT site will be located south of Connery Ave., just off of Hospital Road. It is designed to provide a training area in which units may learn the individual and unit skills needed to fight and defeat an enemy in an urban environment. The MOUT site enhances the training of platoon through company-size elements by allowing them to use rifles in blank fire exercises. The MOUT facility may also be used to conduct law enforcement, civil support and other emergency response related training.

While training at the MOUT site, Soldiers will learn how to patrol, react to contact and clear rooms and buildings in built-up areas. Soldiers will also conduct house-to-house searches on foot in hostile urban areas while learning to distinguish between the characteristics of innocent civilians and enemy combatants. Soldiers will engage in realistic scenarios that require them to travel in convoys and encounter role players posing as civilians or opposing forces on the battlefield.

The MOUT site will consist of 33 buildings constructed from shipping containers, one to two stories high, with a mixture of rubble and complete structures. The village will provide a residential area, school, market place and worship area. It will also have a building used for training classes and after-action review sessions.

The Army National Guard is rapidly adjusting its training strategy to meet the requirements of reduced training time at mobilization sites. As a Regional Training Site, Camp Edwards will prioritize individual and collective training for pre-mobilization training. Creating a regional TTB training site will provide necessary training for numerous units from the northeast states and beyond preparing to deploy. ★

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26th Infantry Brigade Combat Team Conversion to the Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB)

By Lt. Col. John MacPherson, Joint Force Headquarters

The 26th Infantry Brigade Combat Team (IBCT) will convert to the 26th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade (MEB) effective Sept. 1, 2008.

What is a MEB?

The MEB modular force is a mission-tailored combat support brigade. The organic elements of the MEB include a headquarters company, a signal company and a brigade support battalion. These are very robust elements to command, control and support the MEB. The balance of the MEB is built as required by the considerations of its mission, enemy, terrain and weather, troops and support available, time available and civil considerations. It takes advantage of the new "plug-and-play" modular approach that is now the core of our ground force power projection.

Depending on the considerations of METT-TC, the MEB can be assigned a broad range of capabilities, to include: engineer, military police, chemical, air defense and civil affairs units. These units typically function together during the protection, stability and support phase of operations. Additionally, the MEB can be assigned a tactical combat force. This is a combat arms formation such as infantry, cavalry and field artillery that will give the MEB a required combat power.

Since the organization of a MEB is not as fixed as a BCT, it will present a challenge to integrate its assigned, attached or operationally controlled subordinate units into a cohesive organization.

How does this effect units currently assigned to the 26th IBCT?

Tentative disposition of units currently assigned to the 26th IBCT are as follows:

- HHC, 26th IBCT: The HHC of the IBCT will convert into the HHC of the MEB. These two designs are significantly different in size and military occupational structure and will require considerable restructuring of the unit.
- 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment and 1st Squadron, 182nd Cavalry Regiment: The 1-181 IN and 1-182 CAV force structure will remain virtually the same except they will be separate battalions or tactical combat forces. These battalions will be available to "plug-and-play" as needed with an IBCT or with an MEB as a TCF.
- 101st Field Artillery Battalion: The 101st FA will also remain virtually the same in force structure except that it will lose one battery to the Vermont Army National Guard and will be aligned with Vermont's 86th IBCT.
- Brigade Support Battalion. The HHC and Company A (Distribution) and Company B (Maintenance) of the current 26th IBCT will convert in-place to similar units. The IBCT Medical Company will convert to an area support medical company, which will be outside of the BSB force structure. Forward Support Companies D and E will become separate companies, 1181st FSC and 1182nd FSC, with a continued, habitual relationship in

support of the 1-181st IN and the 1-182nd Cavalry. Company G will become Company G/186th BSB and will continue to provide habitual support to the 101st FA.

- Brigade Special Troops Battalion: Except for the signal company, units of the BSTB will be inactivated and consolidated into like force structure within the Massachusetts Army National Guard. The IBCT Signal Company will be converted to a similar, separate Signal Company with a habitual relationship to the 26th MEB.

What about Command and Control and Stationing?

Command and control and stationing issues are presently being staffed. The current guidance is to create as little turmoil as possible in regard to these two issues. A revised command and control plan and station plan will soon be published with an effective date of Oct. 1, 2008.

The creation of the 26th Maneuver Enhancement Brigade will ensure that the Massachusetts Army National Guard remains a modern and capable force for the 21st century. ★



HONORING OUR VETERANS

By Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The rendering of military funeral honors is a way to show the nation's deep gratitude to those who, in times of war and peace, have faithfully defended our country. This ceremonial paying of respect is the final demonstration a grateful nation can provide to the veterans' families. However, out of the more than 800 Army veterans who die in Massachusetts each month, less than 200 of them receive military funeral honors.

The Massachusetts National Guard's military funeral honors program is determined to provide funeral honors to as many veterans as possible, but they need your help. The funeral honors program is

seeking Soldiers interested in performing services in their local communities. The graveside services last approximately three to four minutes and are mostly scheduled between the hours of 9 a.m. and noon. Our Soldiers perform taps and fold and present a flag to the families of the deceased veterans. The Soldiers spend only a few minutes at gravesite, but leave a lasting impression.

For more information about the military funeral honors program, please call Bob Spear at (508) 233-6755. ★



The members of the 110th Food Service Team, from left to right, Staff Sgt. Dana Beauvais, Spc. Heidi Zoll, Staff Sgt. Kenneth English, Sgt. Kevin Blakely, Pfc. Lance Azevedo and Staff Sgt. Michael Perry.

The 110th Maintenance Company sets up their tactical field mess under camouflage. Photos: 110th Maintenance Company

110th Maintenance Competes for the Phillip A. Connelly Award

By the 110th Maintenance Company

Rain may have dampened their uniforms, but it had no effect on the 110th Maintenance Company's spirit as its food service section prepared the noon meal during the Army's 40th Annual Phillip A. Connelly Field Feeding Competition last November. The pressure was on as judges walked through the tactical field mess with clipboards in hand scrutinizing the team's every move.

The food service section of the 110th was chosen last year during annual training to represent Massachusetts in this year's Army wide competition. The competition challenges each state's representatives to prepare a meal in a tactical environment. The 110th won the regional competition, which consisted of seven northeastern states, July 14, 2007. After the regional competition, Capt. Arvid Hill, commander of the 110th, challenged his Soldiers to "exceed yesterday's standard today." They responded successfully with improvements in site layout, defensive positions and most impressively, the meal itself.

The members of the 110th Food Service Team, Staff Sgt. Dana Beauvais, Staff Sgt. Michael Perry, Staff Sgt. Kenneth English, Sgt. Kevin Blakely, Spc. Heidi Zoll and Pfc. Lance Azevedo, set up their field kitchen site to the standards of Field Manual 10-23 and were ready for the Connelly evaluation.

"We're looking for taste, texture, how well the food is garnished, and how well the Soldiers maintain their field kitchen and environmental skills," said

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Ronald Correira, food service technician and team leader of the Department of the Army evaluation team. "Remember, we are looking for excellence in food service, and when units have made it up to this level they are considered one of the best in the country."

Master Sgt. John Bellissimo, food service sergeant, said the meal being evaluated for the competition was, "One of the most difficult and time consuming menus that I have ever seen prepared in the field."

The menu is color coded for caloric content and provides a fitness menu. The meal consisted of French onion soup, Creole pork chops, islander rice, salted crackers, scalloped whole kernel corn, tossed green salad, assorted dressings, chocolate drop cookies, toasted garlic bread, milk, coffee, flavored beverages and of course, condiments to season to taste.

After the competition, Hill accepted the National Guard runner-up award from the DA evaluation team and Massachusetts Air National Guard Commander, Maj. Gen. Michael Akey. Sgt. Kevin Blakely received a leadership award, recognizing his outstanding performance, and Spc. Erin Mallard received a special recognition certificate.

The Connelly Competition began as a partnership between the Department of the Army and the International Food Service Executive Association in 1968, when Framingham resident, and then president of the association, Philip A. Connelly, approached the Army about creating a program recognizing the very best in food service. ★

Regan Inducted Into the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club

By Capt. Stephen Rooney, Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment

Sgt. Audie Murphy once said, "You lead from the front." That's exactly where you'll find Sgt. Daniel Regan, a squad leader in Delta Company, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment based in Baghdad, Iraq. Regan is one of a few noncommissioned officers in a brigade of more than 3,500 Soldiers who will soon be inducted into the prestigious Sergeant Audie Murphy Club after meeting the daunting challenge of the Sergeant Audie Murphy Board.

According to Forces Command Regulation 215-7 and Training & Doctrine Command Regulation 600-14, the SAMC is an elite organization of NCOs whose demonstrated performance and inherent leadership qualities and abilities are characterized by those of Sergeant Audie Murphy.

The purpose of induction into the SAMC is a means of recognizing those NCOs who have contributed significantly to the development of a professional NCO Corps and a combat ready Army. Members exemplify leadership characterized by personal concern for the needs, training, development and welfare of Soldiers and concern for families of Soldiers.

The abbreviated SAMC history reveals that the original club was started at Fort Hood, Texas, early in 1986. The club spread in 1991 to III Corps, and in 1993, it was FORSCOM-wide. Finally, in 1994, at a Sergeant Major of the Army conference, the Sergeant Audie Murphy Club spread Army wide. All commands, including the National Guard and Reserves, would retain the selection process for their own NCOs. In 1998, it was estimated that club membership was more than 3,000 NCOs. There are no quotas for the SAMC; the final selection board does not select candidates if they do not meet the required standards.

"Sgt. Regan was extremely impressive," said Command Sgt. Maj. Drew Craig, Command Sgt. Maj. of the 720th Military Police Battalion, and also a member of the SAMC, "He stood out amongst a talented, competitive and well-prepared field."

Regan was first asked to compete in the board by his platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Michael Lawson. "When you need something done, whatever it may be, you go to Dan Regan," he said.

1st Sgt. Richard Sheehan, long an admirer of Regan's talent, made it easy, "You're competing," said Sheehan.

Regan, busy conducting personal security details for the U.S. Embassy Chief of Mission, as well as numerous combat patrols in and around Baghdad, felt that it was an opportunity to show younger Soldiers the value of competition.

"Every Soldier has the responsibility to compete in every task they undertake," Regan said. "Competitive Soldiers ensure mission success."

Of course, all NCOs, regardless of their qualifications, have to be tested before marching into the qualification board. Regan had to first win a company board against several other well-trained and motivated NCOs. Next was the battalion board, led by Craig.

"The boards definitely became progressively harder as I moved forward," says Regan. "While the company board was focused on basic soldiering skills and mission-specific tasks, the battalion board really gave me an idea of what the actual Sergeant Audie Murphy Board would be like."



Sgt. Daniel Regan in Iraq. Photo: Courtesy of Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment

When competing for induction into the SAMC, the NCO does not compete against other NCOs, like he or she would during other boards, but rather against the impossibly high standards set by Murphy. A Soldier in the famous 15th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Infantry Division, Murphy was wounded three times as he fought in nine major campaigns across North Africa, Sicily, Italy, France and Germany during World War II. Given a battlefield commission for his courage and leadership ability, he was credited with killing more than 240 of the enemy, while wounding and capturing many others. His citations included every Medal for Valor that America gives, including the Medal of Honor, and numerous medals and decorations from France and Belgium. By the end of the war, Lieutenant Murphy was the most decorated Soldier in American history.

"The process of preparing for the SAMC develops NCO knowledge and makes them a better leader," says Craig, "The SAMC is unique in that it separates an average NCO from a superb NCO. A superb NCO goes beyond his regular duties and does them without being asked. He is truly the 'Backbone of the Army.'"

To do well, NCOs have to memorize and recite verbatim the Soldier's Creed, the NCO Creed, SGT Audie Murphy's biography and the history of the club. Then there are dozens of Iraq-based situational questions focusing on ethics, leadership, training and tactics. The highly-decorated and previously inducted command sergeants major use an array of tactics to test the candidate; interruptions, distractions and unanticipated questions are used throughout the board.

"I was in there for an hour," said Regan. "They attacked my confidence and judgment. They came at me from all sides with some tough questions, expecting intelligent answers."

When told by Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard McPherson, 18th Military Police Brigade, that he passed and would be inducted, Regan was justifiably, "thrilled, ecstatic, relieved," he said. "While we spend a lot of time preparing for tactical missions, I spent every available minute over the last three weeks preparing for this board." ★



Col. Paul Smith, Commander of the 51st Troop Command, congratulates the winning team from the 101st Finance Detachment. Photo: Staff Sgt. John Heenan, 126th Military History Detachment

Warrior Team Challenge

By Maj. Jack McKenna, Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

The competition between the teams was fierce as each competed to win the 1st Warrior Team Challenge competition at Camp Curtis Guild this past September.

At the end of the three-day event, all participants could call themselves winners, but only one team could claim to be Warrior Champions! The winning team of Sgt. Luis Alvarez, Sgt. Chris Anderson and Spc. Jason Gonzales from the 101st Finance Detachment earned the title by beating out 12 other teams.

The grueling three-day event began on a Friday night and tested the teams on their warrior skills and physical fitness, culminating in a nine-mile road march with loaded packs.

At 4:30 a.m., Saturday morning, participants awoke and took a modified physical fitness test. Soldiers were allowed to decide what team member would participate in each physical fitness event, as long as all team members participated in at least one event.

After the PT test, the Warrior competition began in earnest. The 13 Warrior tasks were chosen to test the teams on their technical and tactical proficiency and Soldiers were required to conduct the events in full battle gear. Capt. Shawn Cody, action officer for the event, estimated that the Soldiers covered the entire 800 acres of Camp Curtis Guild on foot during the course of the day.

The competition concluded on Sunday with a nine-mile ruck march through historic Lexington National Park and an awards ceremony at Lexington Green.

The 51st Troop Command plans to make this competition an annual event. Who will be the next Warrior Champions? ★

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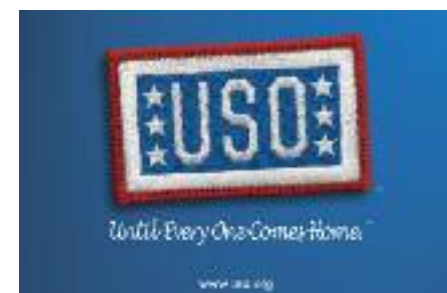
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Honor is a Tradition



Staff Sgt. Willette stands proudly with the Honor Guard at the 104th Fighter Wing F-100 memorial rededication.
Photo: Staff Sgt. Melanie Casineau

By Capt. Matthew T. Mutti, 104th Fighter Wing

For one member of the 104th Fighter Wing, being part of the Base Honor Guard in not just an additional duty, it's a legacy.

Staff Sgt. Christine Willette of Springfield, a member of 104th Medical Group at Barnes Air National Guard Base, was recently selected as the Massachusetts Honor Guard Member of the Year. Willette was selected over Air and Army National Guard members from throughout the state for her dedication to the Honor Guard as well as her commitment to the community.

Willette performed 27 Honor Guard details, which included both military burials and parades in Massachusetts and Connecticut. As a traditional Guardsman, she volunteered to perform these details while balancing a full-time job as a supervisor for the University of Massachusetts Transit Authority, a full-time college workload and 10-hours of volunteer work per week.

Willette understands firsthand about the dedication required to be a member of this elite team. Her grandfather, William H. Willette, was part of the Army's "Old Guard" from 1954 through 1956, and taught Christine at a young age the importance of the sacred ceremonies performed by the Honor Guard.

The legacy of service is a prominent part of the Willette family; her father, Staff Sgt. Ryan W. Willette, of Springfield, also serves his country as a member of the Connecticut Army National Guard.

"Service is an important part of who I am."

— Staff Sgt. Christine Willette

"Service is an important part of who I am," said Willette. "I learned from my dad and my grandfather that our freedoms are not free, and as a member of the Honor Guard, I can pay tribute to the brave heroes who have given their lives for our freedoms."

Willette is very involved with the community.



Staff Sgt. Willette is presented the Honor Guard Member of the Year Award by Col. Marcell Kerdauid.
Photo: Staff Sgt. Melanie Casineau

After graduating from the Air Force Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps at Springfield Central High School, she volunteered to coach its drill teams and mentor the Cadet Corps. She has been instrumental to its success as one of her teams was recently nationally ranked among other high school programs. ★

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UNITED CONCORDIA

Five Centuries of Service: **African Americans in the Massachusetts National Guard**

By Leonid Kondratiuk, Director, Historical Services Office

African Americans have a long and proud history of service in the Massachusetts National Guard. Despite colonial laws that officially restricted them, black militiamen served alongside with their fellow militiamen and defended their towns from Indian attacks. African American militiamen fought at Lexington, Concord and Bunker Hill, and they enlisted for service in the Massachusetts regiments of the Continental Army in June 1775. Militia company commanders ignored the law and enrolled their African American neighbors into local units. Even Gen. George Washington realized that he could not fight and win the Revolutionary War without black Soldiers.

The first African American to serve in the Massachusetts Militia was Pvt. Abraham Pearse who was mustered into the Plymouth militia company in 1643. He was followed by others who drilled monthly and stood guard at night. Pvt. Prince Estabrook was one of the Lexington militiamen who confronted the British force intent to capture colonial arms in Concord. Estabrook was wounded in the fighting, making him one of the first Americans to shed blood in the fight for independence. Minuteman Peter Salem of Framingham took part in the Lexington campaign, and at the Battle of Bunker Hill he was reported to have fired the shot that killed Maj. John Pitcairn, the British field commander at Lexington. Salem went on to serve on active duty in the Continental Army for five years.

Why did they fight for American independence when some were slaves, discriminated against or made to feel unwelcome? They were Americans! Despite their record in the war,



federal and state militia acts excluded blacks from serving in the militia.

Lewis Gaul of Boston organized an African American military unit in 1855, with the hope that one day he and his unit would be allowed to serve in the Massachusetts Volunteer Militia. It was not until 1862, when Massachusetts Gov. John Andrew petitioned the War Department, that Congress changed the militia law to allow African Americans to serve in the militia and on active duty in state volunteer regiments.

It is well known that the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry was one of the first African American regiments to organize and fight in the Civil War. It is less well known that the first African American militia unit to organize was the 1st Separate Company in Boston, in September 1863, commanded by Capt. Lewis Gaul. The organization of the 54th Regiment and the 1st Company was significant because from then on, African Americans served continuously in the U.S. Army and the National Guard.

According to records in the Massachusetts National Guard Museum in Worcester, veterans of the 54th and 55th Massachusetts Regiments enlisted in Company A in Boston and Company B in New Bedford of the 2d Infantry Battalion commanded by Maj. Gaul. These African American Guardsmen were a great source of pride in the black community.

In July 1898, Company L (the former Company A), 6th Massachusetts Infantry, deployed to Puerto Rico to seize the island from Spain. Company L was mobilized again in April 1917, for service in World War I. The company was assigned to a new regiment, the 372d, composed of black Guardsmen from five states and the District of Columbia. While white southern officers did not want black combat units, the French Army did. The 372d was welcomed with open arms by its French division commander and was later awarded the French Army's equivalent of the Presidential Unit Citation, the Croix de Guerre.

Cpl. Clifton Merrimon of Cambridge, a Massachusetts Guardsman serving in Company L, was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in action on Sept. 27, 1918, when he single-handedly destroyed a German machine gun that had stopped his unit. Cpl. Merrimon reorganized his platoon, took command as the senior leader, and continued the attack. The main post office in Cambridge is named the Merrimon Post Office in his honor.

After World War I, Company L was expanded as the 3d Battalion, 372d Infantry. It was a great honor for a young African American to serve in the unit. In 1925, Edward O. Gourdin, a young Harvard graduate and son of a Florida sharecropper, enlisted in Company K shortly after his admission to Harvard Law School. At the 1924 Olympics, he was awarded a silver medal for the broad jump. He received a direct commission later in 1925, which launched him to a distinguished career as a Soldier, scholar and the first African American judge in Massachusetts. During World War II, he was promoted to the rank of colonel and took command of the 372d Infantry.

Col. Gourdin was responsible for training more than 10,000 African American infantrymen who fought in the war. Gourdin and the 372d deployed to Hawaii in May 1945, with the hope of a combat assignment which did not come.

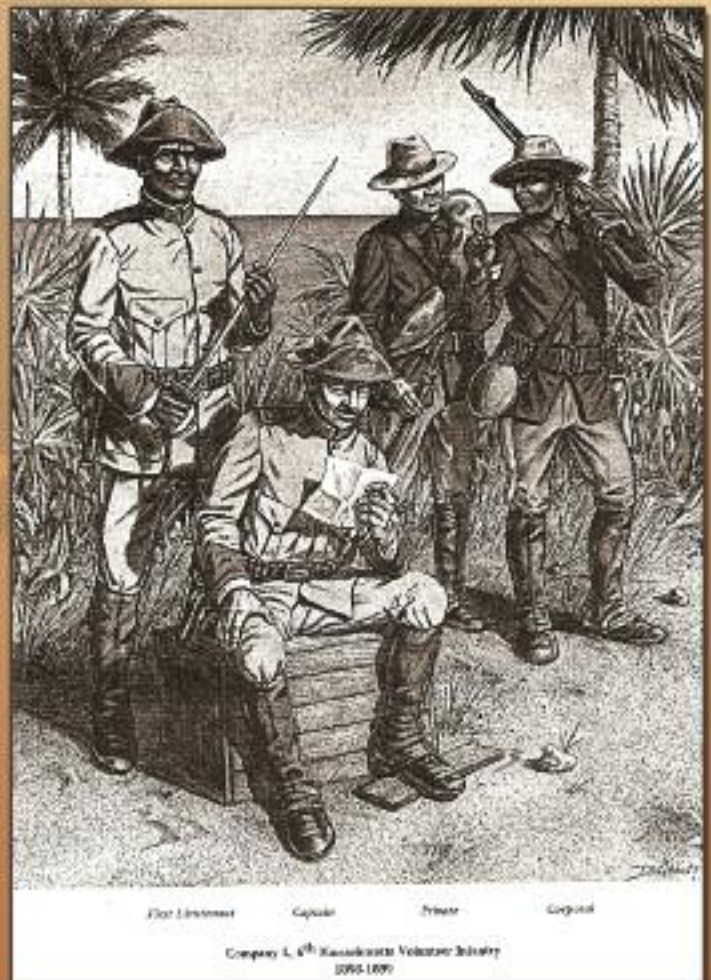
After World War II, the National Guard Bureau allotted the 272d Armored Field Artillery Battalion to Massachusetts as an African American unit in a still-segregated National Guard and U.S. Army. Col. Gourdin voluntarily accepted a reduction in rank to Lt. Col. in order to command the 272d. Young African Americans from Boston and Cambridge, too young to serve in World War II, enlisted to serve under one of Boston's leading black citizens. Lt. Col. Gourdin was their mentor, role model, and to some, a father. In February 1950, Gourdin was promoted to colonel and assigned

to state headquarters. There is a park in Roxbury named in his honor. In September 1950, the 272d was mobilized for service in the Korean War. Commanded by Lt. Col. Karl Russell, the battalion reported to Camp Edwards and began firing their 155mm self-propelled howitzers with great anticipation of combat service. Transferred to Camp McCoy, Wis., the Massachusetts Guardsmen were treated as second-class Soldiers and restricted to the use of one service club, even though the Army was ordered to integrate its units and facilities.

In August 1951, most of the African American officers were ostensibly relieved, because they were not qualified field artillerymen. Boston's African American newspaper covered the story with the headline "Railroaded." The morale of the 272d plummeted, and for the first time in its 88-year history, white officers took command. To avoid additional bad press, the Army rushed the 272d to Germany where the battalion was integrated.

While this was a sad end to a proud black unit, a few African Americans continued to enlist in the integrated Massachusetts Army and Air National Guard. Largely a white organization, there was little attempt to attract and enlist African Americans until the 1970s when Guard leaders finally realized that they had to open the Guard to all.

African American Soldiers and Airmen have served proudly since then and have risen to all levels of leadership. Brig. Gen. Joseph C. Carter, the Massachusetts Guard's first African American general, was appointed the 41st Adjutant General of Massachusetts with concurrent promotion to major general in September 2007. This was a logical historical progression in Massachusetts National Guard history. Pvt. Pearce and all African American Massachusetts Guardsmen that have served through the centuries would have been proud. ★



The Promotion Pages

Pvt. / Airman

AVILES JUAN ANGEL 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 BAILEY HARRY LEWIS G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BIRMINGHAM JOSEPH STEPHEN C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 BIGELOW BRITANNY STARR C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BLECKLEY DAVID ADAM C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 BOUCHER SEAN MICHAEL ENGINEER CO (-) 26TH BSTB
 CASTILLO JONATHAN JOSIAH DET 1 C CO 1ST BN 224TH AV
 CHRISTIAN LAURA KATHRINE SIG NETWORK SPT CO 26TH BSTB
 CLIFFORD DEREK MICHAEL FSC 101ST EN BN
 CONCEPCION DAVID RAMON ENGINEER CO (-) 26TH BSTB
 CORMIER CATLYN NICOLE C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 COURNOYER DANIEL CHARLES BTRY B 1ST BN 101ST FA
 DANIELS GORDON ANTHONY CO B 1ST BN 181ST INF
 DEKOSCHAK BRENDAN CHARLES ENGINEER CO (-) 26TH BSTB
 DELGADO JESSE C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 DIAZSANTIAGO LISETTE HHD 26TH PERS SVC DET
 ENRIQUEZ JORGE ALBERTO C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 FERRAZ LUZ FERNANDO DET 1 ENGINEER CO 26TH BSTB
 FRANCIS MATTHEW NICHOLAS G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 GERO ADAM FRANCIS RAYMOND A CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 GILMORE STEVEN ALLEN 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 HANDORFF TYLER THOMAS 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 HARRISON JOSHUA DAVID B TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 INGLES JOHN PHILLIP 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 JAGMOHAN KUMAR DATCHRAJ FSC 101ST EN BN
 JAMESON SERGIO CARLO C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 JIMENEZ CRYST DAYAN MA ARNG MEDICAL COMMAND
 KELLY COLM PATRICK HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 LARA CARLA MARIA CO E 3RD BN 126TH AVN
 LEARY TIMOTHY FRANCIS C TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 LEVER ADAM ERNEST B TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 LLOYD ANDREW TONY A CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 LYNCH ROBERT THOMAS 181 EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 MANNUZZA DAVID LEWIS B TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 MARCELLUS DAVID G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 MCLAUGHLIN JAMES PATRICK 182ND EN CO (SAPPER) (REAR)
 MILLS CHARLES NMN CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF (REAR)
 MONIZ ASHLEY G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 MONTEROFIAS MODESTO ABEL A CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 MORTIMER ELIZABETH KAY 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO (REAR)
 MURPHY KYLE PATRICK 747TH MILITARY POLICE CO
 ORTIZ JOHN EDWARD E CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 PERKINS MATTHEW STEVEN HHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
 PIERSAINT ADLER HHD 26TH PERS SVC DET
 POIRIER MATTHEW RICHARD B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 ROGALSKI STEVEN EDWARD HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 SEROTTO ANDREW JOSEPH 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 SILVA JONATHAN LEE 387TH ORDNANCE CO EOD
 SILVIA GARIN EDWARD A TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 SYLVESTER WENDY RAYMOND 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 VAZQUEZ ISMAEL CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 VOSBURGH PETER JOEL DET 1 HHC BDE SPC TRPS BN
 WALKER DANIEL DEJESUS G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 WITTMES LUZ DIDIER C CO 126TH CS BATTALION

Pfc. / Airman 1st Class

ALVAREZ HARVEY HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 ASANTE GODWIN OBENG 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 ASHER ANDREW JAMES 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 BARTLETT MICHAEL ADAM G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BEACH SETH RYAN D CO 1ST BN 181ST INF (FWD 2)
 BENOIT BRIDGET MARIE DET 1 HHC BDE SPC TRP BN
 BETTENCOURT AMANDA MARIE C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BILLETTE JERRY FITZROY HHC 26TH BCT (FWD 13)
 BOURN ROBERT VERNON III CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF
 BUCK RICHARD ANTHONY 110TH MAINTENANCE CO
 BUTLER RAYMOND JR G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 CARBERRY FREDERICK THOMAS I HHC 1ST BN 181ST INF
 CENNAMI PAUL ANDREW CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF (REAR)
 CHAMBERS JARED JAMES HHC 26 BCT (FWD 11)
 COACH ANDREW BENEDICT B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 CORKUM JASON DANIEL 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 CORNIERDIAZ LUZ ALBERTO B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 CUBIN GEOFFREY MICHAEL CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 DILLON SHAWN PATRICK 747TH MILITARY POLICE CO
 DUPELLE NICKOLAS EDWARD B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 DURHAM ANTWADE CHERVE B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 EATON MICHAEL DANIEL JR C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 EVANS ROBERT ALLEN 181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 FIGUEROA ANGEL JOEL DET 1 181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 FITZGERALD ERIK PATRICK G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 FOUCHER DUSTIN LEE HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 FREEMAN CASSANDRA DESIREE DET 2 272ND CHEMICAL CO
 GASTON HERVE DAVID C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 GONZALEZ ALBERTO ANTONIO 182ND EN CO (SAPPER) (REAR)
 GOSSON JASON MATTHEW HHC 1ST BN 101ST FA
 HERNANDEZ JOSEPH ALFRED SIG NETWORK SPT CO BSTB
 HINES TYRONE AKEEM D CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 KASPAR JOHN PAUL JR BTRY B 1ST BN 101ST FA
 KENT MICHAEL PAUL HHC 26TH BCT (FWD 13)
 LANGIS TIMOTHY MICHAEL 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 LANGLAIS SCOTT JONATHAN 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 LANZO CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH A CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 LEWIN ANTHONY JOSEPH CO C 1ST BN 181 INF (REAR)
 LOPEZ AMBER ARLENE 747TH MILITARY POLICE CO
 LYONS DAVID THOMAS 182ND EN CO (SAPPER) (REAR)
 MAROTTA JAMES THOMAS JR CO C 1ST BN 181 INF (REAR)
 MARTINEZ EMMANUEL RAFAEL 220TH QM TEAM (WTR SUP)
 MASON SCOTT DET 1 ENGINEER CO BSTB
 MEDEIROS CHRISTOPHER CAMARA BTRY E (TAB) 1ST BN 101ST FA
 MISKELL MICHAEL NORMAND BTRY B 1ST BN 101ST FA
 MONTEIRO TARA ROSITY HHD 164TH TRANS BN

NARDUCCI JUSTIN SAMNANG C CO 1ST BN 181ST INF (REAR)
 NEILL KAITEN JOHN DET 1 ENGINEER CO BSTB
 NICKERSON NICHOLAS ADAM 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 PECH VANNAK E CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 PIANGERELLI GREG MICHAEL CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF
 PIMENTEL IVAN RAYNEL CO D 3RD BN 126TH AVN
 PRATT DENNIS MICHAEL C CO 1ST 181ST INF (REAR)
 RAINVILLE JOHN PAUL FSC 101ST EN BN
 RIVERA EDDIE LUIS HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 RIVERA EMMANUEL CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF
 RIVERA LUIS ANDRES CO C 1ST 181ST INF (REAR)
 ROSARIO JOHN PAUL CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 RUSSO EDWARD JOHN HHS 126TH CS BATTALION
 SAIYATONG KYLE DAVID A TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 SALZBERG BENJAMIN MICHAEL HHC 3RD BN 126TH AVN
 SANTANGELO MICHAEL THOMAS CO C 1ST 181ST INF (REAR)
 SERRANO GARCIA MIGUEL ANGEL 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 SILVA RICHARD ARTHUR CAMP EDWARDS TNG SITE
 SILVESTRE CHARLES ALEXANDER CO C 1ST 181ST INF (REAR)
 SMITH LEIGHTON OLWIN HHD 26TH PERS SVC DET
 SPARKS KENNETH JOSEPH 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 STEPANOV VLADIMIR YURIEVICH B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 TIERNEY SEAN JOSEPH 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 VALENZUELA MANUEL JESSIE 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 VILLEGAS ELISEO 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 WALLACE SHAWN BRENDAN B TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 YOUNIE CHRISTOPHER JOHN CO C 1ST 181ST INF (REAR)
 ZARCONI DANIEL JOHN A CO 126TH CS BATTALION

Spc. / Senior Airman

AALAND VINCENT MATTICE 215TH ARMY BAND
 ALVES MICHAEL 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 ASTROFSKY MICHAEL DAVID 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 ATWELL SHERRIANN MILLICENT C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BEAUBRUN LUCETTE G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BERG ERICA LINN G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BERRIOS JAYLINE MARIE 747TH MILITARY POLICE CO
 BISHOP MICHAEL JOHN 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 BLAIS ROBERT JAMES 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 CANTONI JONATHAN MICHAEL 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 CARUSO JOHN PETER JR G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 CHRETEN MICHAEL ALAN 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 CHRISTIANSEN MATTHEW RONALD 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 CIRIACO LUIS DANIEL CO C 1ST BN 181 INF (REAR)
 COMBES SCOTT MICHAEL 181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 CONFORTO MARC JOSEPH A TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 CORMIER ROLAND PAUL JR 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 COSTELLO ANTHONY STEVEN B TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 COX RICHARD JAMES III 181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 CROCHIERE, KIRK AUSTIN 104TH AIRCRAFT MAINT SQ
 DAYTON JOSEPH DAVID 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 DEMATTOS DAVID PAUL 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 DEMOTADONE FREDDY EMILIO DET 1 ENGINEER CO BSTB
 DEVANEY IAN DANIEL 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 DIAZ EVA MARIA 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 DIMARE JOSHUA JAMES 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 DOBIECKI CHARLOTTE TOBA 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 ENNION DANIEL CHARLES HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 FERREIRA REBECCA J 102ND OPERATIONS SUPPORT FT
 FILANDRIANOS ANDREAS EMMANU 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 FLEMING HOLLY ELIZABETH 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 FONDACKOWSKI KRISLA LYN 104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
 FURTADO JUSTIN G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 GENTRY JAMES MICHAEL 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 GHARONYHASHEMY ZADEH SEYED HHC 3RD BN 126TH AVN
 GLAVIN JEFFREY ALEXANDER 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 GONTHIER MATTHEW JOSEPH D CO 1ST 181ST INF BN (FWD 2)
 GRAHAM ALAN CEDRIC III HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 GRAVES NICOLE MARIE C CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 HARDY STEPHANIE MICHELLE G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 JARVIS DONALD ROBERT 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 KLUFTS ANTHONY JOSEPH 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 LABO THOMAS MATHEW 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 LAMONTAGNE ASHLEY MARIE 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 LEAP PHILLIP WILLIAM D CO 1ST 181ST INF BN (FWD 2)
 LEAGUE WILLIAM PAUL 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 LEWIS ALANA A 253RD COMBAT COMM GP
 LIZOTTE CHRISTOPHER PAUL D CO 1ST 181ST INF BN (FWD 2)
 LUMMUS DANIEL STETSON 104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
 MACDONOTT KEVIN PATRICK 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MACHADO WELLINGTON MAIOLI BTRY B 1ST BN 101ST FA
 MACKENZIE IAN JEFFREY 31ST FIGHTER SQ
 MAGNASCIO DENNIS NICHOLAS JR HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 MAGUIRE FREDERICK JOSEPH 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 MARGWARTH JEREMY PRINCETON SIG NETWORK SPT CO BSTB
 MARTINO DANIEL PATRICK 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MASON MICHAEL GARY JR D CO 1ST BN 181ST INF (FWD 2)
 MCKENNA STEPHEN JOSEPH 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MCMILLAN OWEN JOHN FSC 101ST EN BN
 MCPHERSON ROSE CATHERINE 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MCSWEENEY RYAN JOSEPH 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MERCHANT KEVIN SCOTT 104TH MEDICAL GP
 MESSINGER PAUL VINCENT DET 1 F CO 3RD BN 126TH AVN
 MILLER KENNETH ROBERT II 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 MINER TIMOTHY MICHAEL 104TH SECURITY FORCES SQ
 MITCHELL MICHAEL DEREK BTRY B 1ST BN 101ST FA
 MOGILKA JOHN JOSEPH JR B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 MORALES EDWIN ALEXANDRO 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 MULVIHILL PATRICK JOHN DET 3 B CO 638TH SPT BN
 NELSON JAMES FRANCIS JR 182ST EN CO (SAPPER)
 NHEAN SOPHAN 182ST EN CO (SAPPER)
 OKEEFE PERRY JAMES HHS 126TH CS BATTALION
 OLSON VERNON ERIC IV A TRP 1ST SODN 182ND CAV (FWD)
 OWEN KEVIN ANDREW 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 PARKS PATRICK JOHN 189TH EN TM (ASPHALT)

PHAY THIP D CO 1ST BN 181ST INF (FWD 2)
 RICHMOND JOSEPH MICHAEL SIG NETWORK SPT CO BSTB
 RINCON JUPITER MIGUEL 182ST EN CO (SAPPER)
 RINGUETTE STEPHEN ADAM 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 RIVAS JEREMY CURTIS 747TH MILITARY POLICE CO
 ROBINSON MICHELLE ELIZABETH G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 RODRIGUEZ JUAN CARLOS 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 SMITH EVAN PETER 182ND EN CO (SAPPER)
 SWAN JEREMY BRYAN B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 TORREZANI EMILY ELAINE 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 VALENTIN JONATHAN SIXTO HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 VANN MICHAEL ANTHONY JR HHT 1ST SODN 182ND CAV
 WELCH MARC KELLY 110TH MAINTENANCE CO
 WISNIEWSKI LAURA YONG HHS 126TH CS BATTALION
 ZOLL HEIDI ANN 110TH MAINTENANCE CO

Sgt. / Staff Sgt.

AGYEI KUSI JR HHD 26TH PERS SVC DET
 ALLAN DAVID R 102ND COMMUNICATIONS FT
 ALLEN STEPHEN WILLIAM 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 ANDREWS BRIAN CHRISTOPHER HHS 126TH CS BATTALION
 ARSENAULT JOSEPH LEO CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 BAILEY ANN MARIE 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 BAILEY DAWN MARIE 104TH SECURITY FORCES SQ
 BAKER KEVIN PAUL JR 110TH MAINTENANCE CO
 BEAUREGARD ANDRE JOSEPH 1060TH TRANSPORTATION CO
 BITGOOD JOHN PAUL HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 BLAISDELL CHRISTOPHER JAMES D CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 BOUCHER JOHN MARK MAARNG ELE JFHQ FWD 27
 BOYD JESSE ROBERT JFHQ MASSACHUSETTS
 BURNS KYLIE CHRISTINE 104TH MEDICAL GP
 BURT JOSHUA 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 BUTLER TIMOTHY J 102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
 CARDINALE ALEXANDER T 102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
 CASARA JEAN ALEXANDR 272ND CHEMICAL CO (DET 2)
 COLE KERRI L 102ND FIGHTER WG
 DOHERTY THOMAS MICHAEL B CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 DONNACHIE NATHANIEL PATRICK 104TH MAINTENANCE OPS FT
 DONOGHUE FRANCIS KEVIN DET 1 181ST EN CO (VERT)
 DOYLE GREGORY BRIAN HHC 126TH CS BN (FLE)
 EASTMAN DAVID O 102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
 FAZEKAS ANDREW SEAN 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 GALLANT DANIEL PATRICK HHC 1ST BN 181ST INF
 GAUDINO ANTHONY J 104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
 GEHL MEGHAN C 102ND OPERATIONS SUPPORT FT
 GENDRON JENNIFER CAROLYN 272ND CHEMICAL CO (DET 2)
 GIRARD KRISTOPHER P 102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
 GRIFFIN PETER JAMES 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 GUILLAUME KIMARA 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 HARVEY ISHMAEL ANANDO CRAIG D CO 1ST BN 181 INF (FWD) (LDR)
 HOLOGITAS MICHAEL JONATHAN 1060TH TRANSPORTATION CO
 KEARNS MICHAEL J 104TH AIRCRAFT MAINT SQ
 LAWRENCE ANTHONY CHRISTOPHE HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 LHOMME JOSHUA DENNIS 110TH MAINTENANCE CO
 LOMBARDO CHARLES FREDRICK HHD 211TH MP BN
 LOPES LEON ANTONES 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 LOS AARON EDWARD 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 MEUSE NATHAN ROY 110TH MAINTENANCE CO
 MILLER JAMES ALEXANDER CO C 1ST BN 181ST INF (REAR)
 MONSIEUR JOSEPH JULIAN III HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 NESBITT SAMUEL JAMES JR HHC 126TH CS BN (FLE)
 NORMAN JONATHAN ROBERT HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 OREILLY RICHARD NICHOLAS 272ND CHEMICAL CO (DET 2)
 PAGAN ELADIO JR HHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
 PAQUETTE PAUL RAYMOND DET 1 HHC BDE SPC TRPS BN
 PARSLOR RICHARD FRANCIS CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 RICITELLI MICHAEL JOHN HHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
 RILEY PAUL ALAN 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 ROBERTSON ASALYN MARIE 104TH SECURITY FORCES SQ
 ROCKWELL THOMAS ANDREW 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 RODRIGUEZ DANIEL D CO 1ST BN 181ST INF (FWD 2)
 ROMAN JOSE MANUEL 272ND CHEMICAL CO (DET 2)
 ROMERO ARMANDO RENE DET 1 181ST EN CO (VERT)
 ROZIER JUSTIN THOMAS DET 1 B CO 1ST BN 181 INF
 ROZIER JESSICA SUE HHS 126TH CS BATTALION
 SAND KENNETH ERIC G CO 126TH CS BATTALION
 SANTIAGO RAUL 567TH AIR FORCE BAND
 SCHOMACKER MICHAEL FRANCIS 1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 SCHULTZ ERIC CHARLES CO A 1ST BN 181ST INF
 SMITH ERIC W 102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
 SOSTRE-BAEZ DAVID 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 THOMAS JUSTIN J 102ND AIRCRAFT MAINT SQ
 THOMAS NICHOLAS JAMES 189TH EN TM (ASPHALT)
 THOMPSON DAVID PITT 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 TORREY TIMOTHY DAVID 182ND EN CO (SAPPER) (REAR)
 TRAN NHEN SOC 272ND CHEMICAL CO (DET 2)
 VACHON JAMES ROBERT 772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 VAZAL LINDSAY J 253RD COMBAT COMM GP
 WALLIS ASHLEY MAE DET 1 HSC 101ST EN BN
 WARREN DALE MICHAEL DET 1 181ST EN CO (VERT)
 WELCH MARK ROBERT 189TH EN TM (ASPHALT)
 WELLS ERIC RICHARD 1166TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
 WHITTENBURG JESHURUN DAVID 104TH FIGHTER WG
 WILSON ALEXANDER ISAAC 379TH ENGR CO (HORIZ)
 WOODSIDE DANNY ROBERT DET 1 181ST EN CO (VERT)
 YOUNG DOMINIC LORENZO HHS 1ST BN 101ST FA

Staff Sgt. / Tech. Sgt.

APHER MELANIE E 125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
 BEAUCHESE BRIAN DENNIS 972ND MILITARY POLICE CO
 BONNER THOMAS JOHN 181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
 CHASE DENNIS PAUL HHD 151ST REGIONAL SPT GRP
 CHILDS LYNN ANN CO A 126TH CS BATTALION

CRANE MICHAEL THOMAS II104TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
CRAWFORD JOHN P102ND COMMUNICATIONS FT
DANIEL JOSHUA D102ND MAINTENANCE SQ
DEGNAN DAVID A102ND MAINTENANCE SQ
DICKSON BRYAN FITZGEROLDET 3 CO B 638TH SPT BN
FALORNI FABIO MARIOCO C 1ST BN 181ST INF
HA MARLENE THIHHC 126TH CS BN (FLE)
HUARD DANIEL R104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
HUNTER ARMAND KENDALLHHT 1ST SQDN 182ND CAV
KINSMAN WILLIAM JOSEPH IV26TH MILITARY POLICE CO
LANSING SARA MEGAN1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
LEDDY BRIAN JEROLDHHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
LEONARD MATTHEW LAWRENCE104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
MAHNKEN DENISE MARIE181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
MENWER YASSER104TH OPERATIONS SUPPORT FT
MONTANO BISMARCKHHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
MORRIS KEVIN HAROLDHHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
PERDOMO JERRY102ND LOGISTICS READINES SQ
PHIPPS KEVIN T202ND WEATHER FT
RAMOS ANDYHHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN
REIS DONALD CHARLESMA ARNG REC AND RET CMD
REYNOLDS PATRICK JOSEPHHHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
SABADOSA WILLIAM LEWIS JR104TH MAINTENANCE OPS FT
SOLBO CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH1058TH TRANS (LT/MED) TC
TORRES JORGE A102ND AIRCRAFT MAINT SQ
TUCKER BRIAN PATRICK SRCO D 126TH CS BATTALION
WEBB ANTHONY R102ND COMMUNICATIONS FT

Sgt. 1st Class / Master Sgt.

BARBOSA NELSON GABRIEL188TH EN DET (FAC MGT)
BROWN JAMES ALEXANDER II104TH MISSION SUPPORT FT
CARTER PAUL EDDIEC CO 1ST BN 20TH SFG (A)
DRAWE TEDDY EDWARD125TH QUARTERMASTER CO
DUBOIS ERRICK DAVIDD CO 126TH CS BATTALION
FIGHTENMAYER ROBERT NEAL181ST EN COMPANY (VERTICAL)
GOTTSCHALK GUY G102ND MAINTENANCE SQ
HAGGERTY PATRICK E102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
HARRIMAN WALTER M III104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
HUARD SHANNON M104TH FIGHTER WVG
KUSTRA ROBERT STANLEY104TH MAINTENANCE GP
LIGHTBOWN KYLE J267TH COMBAT COMM SQ
MUTTI SHELLEY LEIGH104TH COMMUNICATIONS FT
RABBITT SEAN PATRICKA TRP 1ST SQDN 182ND CAV
REUTER DANIEL LAWRENCE II104TH SECURITY FORCES SQ
ROBERTSON MARK EDWARDJFHQ MASSACHUSETTS
SCOTT MARK RICHARDHHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
SMITH ERNEST EDWARD104TH MISSION SUPPORT FT
VERCELLONE MARC P102ND SECURITY FORCES SQ

Master Sgt. / Senior Master Sgt.

CARDAROPOLI SCOTT JOSEPH104TH MAINTENANCE SQ
KEPHART CHRISTOPHER PAUL772ND MILITARY POLICE CO
MORIN THEODORE FRANCIS212ST ENG INSTL SQ
PATRICK STEPHEN JOSEPH104TH CIVIL ENGINEER SQ
RIVERA EDWIND747TH MILITARY POLICE CO

Sgt. Maj. / Chief Master Sgt.

PERRA MICHAEL A102ND CIVIL ENGINEER SQ

Command Sgt. Maj. / Command Chief Master Sgt.

DUBOIS NORMAND GERARD JRHHC (-) BDE SPC TRPS BN

Chief Warrant Officer 4

ZEMANEK GLENN JOHNC CO 1ST 20TH SFG (A) (FWD 8)

1st Lt.

KNILL, VICTOR E.102ND STUDENT PILOT FLIGHT

Capt.

BYRNE, NEAL III131ST FIGHTER SQUADRON
CARROLL, BRIAN J.102ND MEDICAL GROUP
GONCALVES MATTHEW ALEXANDERHHC 26TH INF BDE (FWD 4)
KELLEY, MICHAEL C.102ND MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS FLIGHT
LEIGHTON, CHRISTIAN A.102ND CIVIL ENGINEERING SQUADRON
MILLIKEN, GLEN G. JR101ST FIGHTER SQUADRON
REIM, KEVIN M.104TH AIRCRAFT MAINTENANCE SQUADRON

Maj.

BAEZ JOSE RIGOBERTOMA ARNG MEDICAL COMMAND
FILSON JASON ADAMHHC 26TH INF BDE FWD 5
GIANDOMENICO PAUL MICHAEL79TH TROOP COMMAND
PORTER MATTHEW NEILHHC 26 IN BDE FWD 7

Lt. Col.

COMO GEORGE EDWARDHHC 26TH INF BDE (YANKEE)
ELBTHAL ARTHUR MICHAELHHC 26 IN BDE FWD 7
GAGE, MATTHEWMASSACHUSETTS AIR GUARD HEADQUARTERS
JOHNSON RICHARD FRANCISJFHQ MASSACHUSETTS
ROLLINS RICHARD GERARD51ST TROOP COMMAND
VALLÉE JAMES EMILEHHD 151 REGIONAL SPT GRP
WHITE MARGARET CASSIDY1ST CIVIL SPT TEAM (WMD)

Col.

MACLEOD STERLING DAVIDJFHQ MASSACHUSETTS

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J. Drew Craig, Command Sgt. Major of the 720th Military Police Battalion. Photo: U.S. Army

Job Well Done!



I am the Command Sgt. Major for the 720th MP Battalion out of Fort Hood, Texas. My unit is currently serving in Iraq and we currently have two of your companies serving under our command and control here: Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment out of Hudson; and the 972nd Military Police Company out of Reading. I am writing to tell you what a GREAT job these two units are doing here for us and for our nation. These two units are well led, extremely motivated, and they are performing missions that are of strategic importance. Both companies are not only accomplishing all assigned missions, but they are doing so with exceedingly high standards. While I know you and the folks of Massachusetts are proud of these units and Soldiers ... if you could see these warriors in action, you would simply be amazed.

In particular, I want to single out some noncommissioned officers that have made a tremendous impact. 1st Sgt. Richard Sheehan (Co. D, 1-181 IN) and Master Sgt. Steven Buccheri (currently serving as the 972nd First Sergeant) are AWESOME! These two first sergeants brought motivated troops to the fight, and they have provided a level of energy to their units and the mission that is simply remarkable. I could not ask for better first sergeants. They are passionate about their jobs, they care deeply about their Soldiers, and they ARE making a difference here. Their Soldiers are blessed to have men of this caliber leading them.

Additionally, I want to point out Sgt. 1st Class Michael Lawson and Sgt. 1st Class Joseph Petrone of Delta Company as having far exceeded the standard here. Sgt. 1st Class Petrone is currently serving as the Operations Sergeant for Delta Company. I have eight units, and Sgt. 1st Class Petrone is the best operations sergeant in the battalion. Because of the unique mission, Sgt. 1st Class Petrone's work load and daily duties are equivalent to that of an S-3 Sergeant Major, and he is working at that level. Sgt. 1st Class Petrone's performance has been exemplary and he is largely responsible for the mission success of Delta Company.

Sgt. 1st Class Lawson has also excelled in his position as platoon sergeant. I have witnessed this NCO in action on numerous occasions and each time I have come away impressed. His Soldiers are disciplined, his equipment is immaculately clean and prepared, and his platoon is always mission ready. As a testament to his outstanding leadership, Sgt. 1st Class Lawson was directly responsible for one of his young sergeant's (Sgt. Regan) induction into the prestigious Sergeant Audie Murphy Club just a few days ago. Sgt. 1st Class Lawson, and the other leaders here, get very little personal time. Sgt. 1st Class Lawson chose to devote his limited personal time to mentoring Sgt. Regan and preparing him for this board. I believe that the process of preparing for the SAMC Board is a great tool for pushing young NCOs to learn and grow professionally. Sgt. Regan is a more knowledgeable NCO for having gone through this process and Sgt. 1st Class Lawson was the driving force behind Regan's success in this endeavor.

Lastly, I want to add that another of your units recently departed our battalion. We were blessed to have Headquarters and Headquarters Battery, 1st Battalion, 101st Field Artillery Regiment here as part of the 720th. 1st Sgt. Shane Rioux was just as effective as both 1st Sgt. Sheehan and Master Sgt. Buccheri. That unit set a high mark on the wall for those that followed, and I attribute their success largely to the positive impact and efforts of 1st Sgt. Rioux.

In closing, I want you to know that you and your state sent us three GREAT units that I am proud to have as part of my formation. I have worked extensively with the National Guard from various states throughout my 26 years of service to include units from Texas, Louisiana, Hawaii, Georgia (my home state), Alabama, Delaware, California and North Carolina; but I have never seen units like the three from Massachusetts that have served here with us. I applaud the caliber of unit and Soldier that your great state has sent to the fight here, and I wanted to make sure you knew how my command here feels about these folks. I would eagerly accept any of the three units I've worked with here from Massachusetts into my active duty formation back at Fort Hood. They are simply GREAT COMPANIES!

Thank you and God bless,

J. Drew Craig
CSM, USA, Command Sergeant Major
Gauntlet 7 - "Soldiers of the Gauntlet"



Pictured from left to right: Command Sgt. Maj. J. Drew Craig, 720th Military Police Battalion; 1st Sgt. Steven J. Buccheri, 972nd Military Police Company; 1st Sgt. Richard Sheehan, Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment; and Command Sgt. Maj. Bernard C. McPherson, 18th Military Police Brigade. Photo: 1st Lt. Kristopher Jong, 972nd Military Police Company

Recruiting in the City



Entryway of new recruiting office located at 51 Park Ave. in West Springfield. Photo: Senior Master Sgt. Robert Sabonis

By Capt Matthew Mutti, 104th Fighter Wing Public Affairs

As the 104th grows to support its new mission, the recruiting office has adapted a new strategy, which is to move to where the recruits are.

The wing recruiters opened a new storefront office at 51 Park Ave. in West Springfield, in addition to the joint storefront office in the Solomon Pond Mall in Marlboro. Later this year, the wing anticipates opening another office in the eastern part of the state.

"The storefront office provides a greater level of exposure to potential recruits," said Master Sgt. Debbie Shilaikis, the recruiting officer supervisor. "The community based approach complements the G-RAP program, which encourages all members to be recruiters."

The office in West Springfield is designed to offer the new recruits a comfortable, convent environment to explore carrier opportunities. The location is ideal for both the new members and the base community in that it decreases some of the security risks and hassles associated with walk-in appointments on the installation.

The movement of the recruiting office is part of a National Guard plan to market outside of the base and make recruiting offices more accessible to the public. As the Massachusetts Air National Guard expands and requires more talented team players, it must seek out potential recruits throughout the state.

The recruiting offices are open from 7 a.m. to 5 p.m., or by appointment. The West Springfield office contact number is (413) 733-0864, and Staff Sgt. Andi Stover can be contacted at the Solomon Pond Mall at (413) 237-6735. For more information on the G-RAP program, please visit www.GuardRecruitingAssistant.com. ★

G-RAP *Update*

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Girard, Recruiting and Retention Command

The Guard Recruiting Assistant Program continues to be a success with 805 new Soldiers joining the Massachusetts Army National Guard since the program began March 2006. According to Master Sgt. Robert Harrington, G-RAP manager for the state, "We now have over 2,366 recruiter assistants in the program."

Staff Sgt. Bruce Bartiloni, of the 1164th Transportation Company, is once again the top recruiter assistant with 35 Soldiers nominated, 18 of whom have completed their contracts and 16 of whom have shipped to basic combat training, earning him \$36,000. Another notable RA is 1st Sgt. William Chiano, 1058th Transportation Company, with 23 potential soldiers and 13 contracts, earning him \$26,000.

Leading units are the 1058th Transportation Company, with 39 contracts; the 972nd Military Police Company, with 37 contracts; and the 747th Military Police Company, with 31 contracts. Other notable units are Company D, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment, with 27 contracts; and Headquarters Company of the Special Troops Battalion, also with 27 contracts. Warriors of the Recruit Sustainment Battalion continue to bring in leads every month; they are largest lead generators for the Guard.

Remember, it is not how many Soldiers a unit has signed up for the G-RAP program, it is the number of Soldiers who have nominations and contracts of potential Soldiers that counts. If every Soldier submitted one lead a month we could considerably increase the strength of the Massachusetts Army National Guard. We challenge all commanders and senior noncommissioned officers to motivate Soldiers to join G-RAP and nominate individuals to join the Massachusetts Army National Guard. To date, Massachusetts leads the New England states in the program.

RAs can now recruit potential officers, to date there are 15 new potential officers nominated. Also, a unique collaboration with United Healthcare makes all Army National Guard Soldiers participating in the Guard Recruiting Assistance Program qualify for optional healthcare insurance coverage in lieu of receiving \$2,000 for every new recruit a recruiting assistant brings into the Guard and ships to Basic Combat Training. The nationwide coverage plan includes medical, dental, vision and life insurance.

Recruiting Assistants are embedded in their respective communities and are uniquely positioned to tell the Guard story to potential Soldiers. Citizen-Soldiers can earn valuable additional income by becoming RAs themselves. It's the effective way to promote strength from within. It is a win-win situation for all who get leads for G-RAP.

Visit www.GuardRecruitingAssistant.com for more information on the G-RAP program. ★

Task Force Diamond's Hard Work Pays Off

By 1st Lt. Brian Ferland, Task Force Diamond, 726th Finance Battalion

The men and women of the 726th Finance Battalion deployed to Afghanistan as "Task Force Diamond" have worked hard to help improve the Afghan economy, fight corruption and provide timely and accurate finance support to Service Members deployed throughout the Combined Joint Area of Operations.

TF Diamond and Da Afghanistan Bank (the national bank of Afghanistan) have worked cooperatively to transition payments to host nations and foreign contractors from U.S. dollars to Afghan currency, the Afghani. Since the inception of this initiative, inflation bottomed out at 3.9 percent, compared to 16.3 percent in 2006. Meanwhile the strength of the Afghani stabilized in relation to the dollar fluctuating by no more than 1 percent for the duration of the tour. As a result, the citizens of Afghanistan have become accustomed to receiving their native currency for payment, further bolstering the nation's confidence in their banking and financial systems.

To assist in reducing corruption, the 726th is partnered with Combined Security Transition Command, Afghanistan's police reform directorate, to continue to reform the Afghan national police pay system. Overall, 42 percent of the country was switched to electronic funds transfers through the ANP pay reform program. This equated to a 1,300 percent increase in total provinces that fully utilized electronic funds transfer as the means to pay their policemen, and directly impacted in rebuilding the faith of Afghan citizens in Afghanistan's commercial banking system.

The 726th Finance Battalion has also continuously executed finance support team missions. These missions provided fellow Service Members the opportunity to receive professional, full-spectrum finance support in the most remote areas of the CJOA. Combined with cashier services available from finance offices at the major forward operating bases, TF Diamond averaged more than 10,000 casual pay and check transactions totaling more than \$3.5 million.

The 726th has also worked cooperatively with the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to update, augment and improve the Eagle Cash card program throughout the CJOA, expanding access to more FOBs and more Service Members than ever before. Eagle Cash is a cash management tool designed to support U.S. military personnel deployed in combat zones and on peace-keeping missions. The program, which improves convenience for Soldiers and other authorized personnel, was developed and is managed jointly by the U.S. Army, U.S. Air Force and U.S. Department of the Treasury.★



Left to Right: Battalion Commander Lt. Col. Thomas A. Devine, translator, Bagram Base Ops Commander Col. Ives, Da Afghanistan Bank governor Noorullah Delawari and Mr. Turah, pose in Kabul at a press conference to announce the new MOA between the U.S. Army and Da Afghanistan Bank. Photo: Task Force Diamond



Left to Right: Deputy Disbursing Officer 1st Lt. Brian Ferland, Da Afghanistan Bank Bagram branch manager Mr. Tamim Rafi, Battalion Executive Officer Maj. Julie Winston and Bank Treasurer Mr. Jamal Sedeqi. Photo: Task Force Diamond



Bottom Left: Battalion Command Sgt. Major Ronald E. LeBlanc out on an exploratory trip with a group of CSM's from OEF. Photo: Task Force Diamond



Finance Support Team NCOIC Sgt. Raymond Baron in Jalalabad. Photo: Task Force Diamond.



Redlegs defensive pair Col. Sterling MacLeod (foreground white jersey) and Lt. Col. Bill O'Brien (background white jersey) in action during the Armed Forces Hockey Championships against the Travis Air Force Base Jets (blue jersey). Photo: Staff Sgt. Michael Gonsalves



Wearing the 101st Field Artillery's distinctive unit insignia from WWI, Redlegs team captain and goaltender Sgt. 1st Class Pat Burke protects the Redlegs goal during Armed Forces Tournament play. Photo: Staff Sgt. Michael Gonsalves

Redlegs Celebrate 25th Consecutive Season

By Spc. Cecil Thompson, 1st Battalion (Strike), 101st Field Artillery Regiment

The Redlegs ice hockey team celebrated its 25th consecutive season of play this year. The team was started in 1983, as the idea of then 2nd Lt. Sterling MacLeod while serving in the 1st Battalion, 102nd Field Artillery Regiment. MacLeod felt it was an ideal way to maintain cohesion within his unit, Battery B, during the winter months between drills.

Before joining the National Guard, MacLeod played on military teams at Fort Meade, Md., Zweibrucken Air Base, Germany, while he served on active duty with the U.S. Army. Unit sports were an integral part of barracks life for junior enlisted Soldiers at each of his duty stations, so MacLeod was confident that the Massachusetts National Guard could easily support an ice hockey team.

MacLeod reports that over the past 25 years the Redlegs have called 12 different arenas home, and nearly 300 different players have worn the jersey. MacLeod believes the organization's strength and longevity have come from the great cross section of the Guard from which the team has drawn its players.

While the team no longer plays in organized weekly hockey leagues, the Redlegs do practice weekly at the Foxboro ice rink and regularly play against other military and law enforcement teams based in New England. Since 2002, team captain Sgt. 1st Class Pat Burke has led the team to three championship trophies in the annual Armed Forces Hockey Tournament held in Las Vegas, Nev.

The Ancient & Honorable Artillery Company of Massachusetts has sponsored the Redlegs during the tournament for the past several years, helping to reduce the costs for the team's most junior players.

The team is always searching for new players and encourages other Massachusetts National Guard units to organize teams and accept the challenge of a friendly game. Interested players can contact Sgt. 1st Class Pat Burke or Staff Sgt. Cobb at (508) 559-1024/1038 or Col. Sterling MacLeod at (508) 962-7676. ★

Primus Inter Pares

By 2nd Lt. Kyle C. Moore, Company C, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment

We are Charlie Company, 1st Battalion of the 181st Infantry Regiment, Massachusetts Army National Guard. The name speaks for itself as the 181st Regiment has the singular distinction of being the oldest military unit in the United States. The Soldiers of Charlie Company, most of whom have served at least one previous tour, are deployed in Iraq for a year-long tour of duty under the command of Capt. Eric J. DiNoto.

The Minutemen of Charlie Company have been tasked with a mission that effectively confers upon them the status of "primus inter pares" (first among equals) among the thousands of National Guard troops who are currently serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom. We are responsible for providing discrete, non-uniformed military protective escort and armed security on extremely sensitive Department of Defense missions. The majority of our operations are within the "Red Zone," and thanks to the endeavors of the Charlie Company Soldiers these hostile territories are just a little bit less hostile and considerably more manageable. That is a fact that the Soldiers of Charlie Company, ranging in ages from mature 20s to a youthful 47, are justifiably very proud of.

Charlie Company underwent a challenging training regiment at Camp Shelby, Miss., in preparation for movement "down range." Some of these Minutemen also underwent specialized training provided by a group specializing in mission specific tactics and teaching points in Virginia. That training included advanced tactical vehicular operations, evasive driving techniques and advanced weapons training. While anyone from any other state would find the experience to be a heart-stopping, near roller-coaster ride of screeching tires and pedal to the metal, Sgt. 1st Class Tom



Members of Charlie Company make relaxed grooming standards look good while deployed to Iraq. Photo: Company C, 1st Battalion, 181st Infantry Regiment

Stackpole and Sgt. Charlie Panek said that it was no different than driving on the Southeast Expressway during rush hour.

We are used to "firsts," but Sgt. Ted Filandrianos finds it ironic that the first time he has sported long hair and a beard is while on active duty in Iraq. He said that he looks forward to the day when he can return to civilian life ... so he can cut his hair short and be clean-shaven.★

Pfc. Karleen Murphy Awarded for Outstanding Achievement

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Girard, Recruiting and Retention Command



Pfc. Karleen Murphy, of Worcester, has been recognized for outstanding achievement while attending basic combat training and advanced individual training as a new recruit in the Army National Guard. Murphy enlisted in the Massachusetts Army National Guard last June at the age of 41.

"I always wanted to be in the National Guard, so when I went online and found out you could now join up to the age of 42, I signed up," Murphy said. "I went to basic training two days before my 42nd birthday."

While at basic training and advanced training, Murphy far exceeded her peers. She was selected as the Soldier of the Month and was presented with the first Bulldog Leadership Award given at Fort Lee, Va., for outstanding leadership. Murphy also received an Army Achievement Medal for her personal initiative and commitment to excellence.

During the second phase of her training at Fort Lee, Murphy received her second Army Achievement Medal for outstanding achievement during the Food Specialist Course by achieving an overall score of 290 out of a possible 300 on the Army physical fitness test.

"My recruiter, Sgt. 1st Class George Dustman, was a great motivator, helping me get ready for basic training," Murphy said. "I hope to become a drill sergeant and help train young Soldiers. It is also my goal to deploy for Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Murphy serves in the Massachusetts Army National Guard with the 125th Quartermaster Company stationed in Worcester. ★

"I always wanted to be in the National Guard, so when I went online and found out you could now join up to the age of 42, I signed up. I went to basic training two days before my 42nd birthday."

Representative Stephen Lynch Visits Baghdad



Soldiers from Massachusetts had dinner with Rep. Steven Lynch during his visit to Baghdad. Photo: 1st Lt. Kristopher Jong, 972nd Military Police Company

By Multi-National Security Transition Command, Public Affairs

BAGHDAD – Massachusetts Rep. Stephen Lynch visited members of the Multi-National Security Transition Command–Iraq, and other units assigned to the International Zone, Jan 8.

Lynch ate dinner and entertained questions from Service Members in the base dining facility.

"I am grateful for your service and am honored to be here," said Lynch.

Rep. Lynch spoke about this most recent trip, his seventh in four years, and how the situation has improved, especially in Ramadi. He spoke of his work in various subcommittees, which denies the use of legal banking systems for laundering practices by terrorists.

The Service Members spoke with Rep. Lynch on topics ranging from the progress being made in Iraq and regional affairs to local topics.

"Being able to spend time with people from back home was very refreshing," said U.S. Army Captain Claudia Crossland, a native of Beverly, Mass.

Rep. Lynch made time to take pictures with the Service Members after dinner and said, "I try to serve the people who do." ★



Massachusetts Rep. Steven Lynch shakes the hand of one of his constituents, Sgt. Frank Recupero of the 972nd Military Police Company, after dinner, in Baghdad. Photo: 1st Lt. Kristopher Jong, 972nd Military Police Company

Recruit Sustainment Battalion Marches On

By Chief Warrant Officer 4 James Girard

The Recruit Sustainment Program is currently training a total of 492 new warriors in the Massachusetts Army National Guard.

According to Sgt. 1st Class Dennis Bishop, the noncommissioned officer in charge of training for the RSP, "There are 744 warriors in the RSP right now; of that number 252 have shipped to Initial Active Duty Entry Training. The increase in Soldiers is due to the success the Recruiting Command has had in the last year."

The Recruiting Command has met its mission with more than 1,301 new Soldiers joining the Guard this year.

"We expect to grow to around 800 RSP Soldiers in the next few months thanks to recruiting efforts," Bishop said. "Our training at the RSP has maintained the interest of the young warriors. We have been training them on the rappel tower, helicopter operations, lifesaving, camouflage techniques and bivouac training, as well as Army Values, leadership and winter survival training at Camp Ethan Allen, Vt. This month the RSP Troops participated in water survival operations at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy."

New recruits participate in RSP after enlisting in the Guard and before shipping to Basic Combat Training.

"The program results in better retention of new Soldiers going to basic training and improves the percentage of Soldiers who complete their initial training successfully," said Bishop. "Because of the high standard of training in the RSP we have had 37 Honor graduates from Basic Combat Training in the 2007 training year."

This was a special year for the RSP as they were designated as the 104th Recruit Sustainment Battalion in a ceremony on Camp Edwards. The RSB now holds the lineage and honors of the 104th Infantry Regiment dating back to 1639.



RSB Warriors are carefully watched by the cadre as they learn crucial skills during Combat Water Survival Training at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy. Photo: Sgt. Jamie Gaitan, Recruiting & Retention Command.

Task Force Lexington in Iraq

Story by Lt. Col. Katherine Corkery and Captain Geoffrey Love, 151st Regional Support Group

The 151st Regional Support Group was officially activated Sept. 1, 2005, and re-organized from the 79th Troop Command, a headquarters of 28 Soldiers, to become a headquarters of 57 Soldiers. The federal mission of the 151st RSG is to provide the command and control structure for non-combatant operations and assist both active and reserve component units in meeting training, readiness and deployment requirements. Our challenge in mobilization was to supplement our combat service support team with experienced combat and combat support Soldiers.

The 151st RSG, aka Task Force Lexington, arrived at Victory Base Complex, Baghdad, and assumed control of base defense operations in May 2007, and was attached to the 1st Cavalry Division, Multi-National Division – Baghdad. The mission was to conduct base defense operations through a layered defense by synchronizing exterior battle space and maneuver with force protection measures, intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance and civil-military operations. This supports freedom of movement and protects critical nodes and assets while sustaining a safe and secure environment on VBC.

TF Lexington has command and control of the Area Defense Operations Cells: TF Vigilant, 164th Engineer Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Battalion, 1-181st Infantry Regiment and 2-10th Brigade Support Battalion, as well as TF Hurricane, a Navy element operating the Counter-Rocket Artillery Mortar Battery. TF Lexington integrates EOD-T, a private security company, in order to supplement the Soldiers providing base security. The operational environment includes entry control points, perimeter towers and interior and exterior presence patrols. The 151st RSG directs combat operations in the Lexington OE to stabilize the areas outside the perimeter walls and actively pursue internal threats.

The Base Defense Operations Center is the command and control center of the defense operation and critical for maintaining situational awareness. Using the best information available, the TF Lexington commander and the

operations officer make critical, timely decisions that ultimately affect the lives of the inhabitants of the base.

Along with its elements, the BDOC planned, supported and executed offensive operations, counter indirect fire operations, electronic warfare operations and counter improvised explosive device operations within their assigned battle space. TF Lexington, with the supporting ADOCs, has planned and executed more than 53 operations, including 17 lethal, 36 non-lethal and 18 detainee operations. During these operations, six weapons caches and 24 improvised explosive devices were discovered and neutralized. These operations contributed to the stability and security of the people of Iraq, as well as support to Coalition Forces.

The operations and intelligence teams have targeted and detained more than 50 high value individuals in TF Lexington's operational environment and assisted in the detention of at least 20 more in neighboring areas since June 2007. To mitigate internal threats, they work with elements that complete compliance inspections and conduct vulnerability assessments to guard against the infiltration of Anti-Iraqi Forces. This includes analyzing confiscated illegal weapons, computers, cell phones and cameras.

TF Lexington conducted non-kinetic and shaping of the OE through civil military operations, which included continuous engagements with sheiks and village leaders regarding economic, governance and essential services issues. Micro-grants provide financial assistance to disadvantaged entrepreneurs whose businesses support humanitarian relief and reconstruction. Since May, 2007, TF Lexington provided more than \$147,000 for these grants. Power generation projects supply independent power sources for Iraqi citizens who cannot connect to the main Baghdad grid. Essential services projects involve network connections to water, sewer and electrical power. More than \$1.25 million has been invested repairing or upgrading these critical needs.



Members of the 151st Regional Support Group at Fort Dix, N.J. Photo: Courtesy of the 151st Regional Support Group

Left to right: Sgt. Juan Hernandez, Sgt. 1st Class Marcos Mencia and Sgt. Juan Garcia in full gear. Photo: Courtesy of the 151st Regional Support Group



*Lt. Col. Daniel Knight, 151st RSG, shakes hands with an Iraqi officer during a civil affairs project.
Photo: Courtesy of the 151st Regional Support Group*

One major initiative of this command is Operation Horace Mann, which is aimed at improving educational facilities and opportunities in our OE. Between the efforts of the 130th Field Artillery Brigade and the 151st RSG, we expect contributions to the educational projects will exceed \$1.2 million.

In support of the economic initiatives, three marketplace facilities have been planned and two have begun construction at a baseline cost of \$800,000. These markets will support agri-business initiatives and will improve commerce in our OE. We have engaged in food, office supply and hand tool drops in coordination with local sheiks and village leaders to provide for basic needs and build goodwill among the populace. The removal of garbage and debris in the streets and canals has been an important initiative to improve the quality of life throughout our OE; we have provided \$1 million to support these efforts.

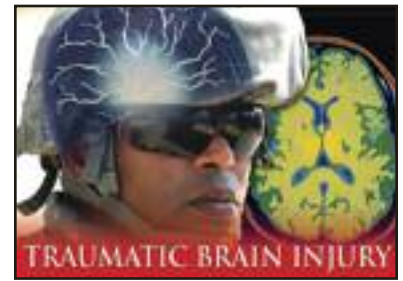
TF Vigilant, in coordination with the residents and political leaders of Airport Village, conceived and built a governance building in which a station of Iraqi police based its operations, to allow continuous, 24-hour presence and security for residents. They also worked with the residents and leaders of Iraqi Family Village, to conceive and protect an informal election, which resulted in the formation of a town council and a mayor. The 1-164th Engineers has established two city councils in Makasib and Al Furat, and a sheik council in Radwaniyah. They have also established six Iraqi volunteer checkpoints.

TF Lexington will continue lethal and non-lethal operations within the perimeter and outside VBC to protect important activities and the population. Operations and improvements will continue until our replacements arrive and the 151st RSG returns home, having completed a successful deployment. ★

TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

By Joint Force Headquarters Public Affairs

Traumatic brain injury has been called the "signature wound" of the Global War on Terrorism and growing numbers of service members are returning with a range of brain injuries. One of the deceptive things about brain injuries is that they are not visible. More than 60 percent of blast injuries involve traumatic head injuries. Other violent events, such as aircraft crashes and motor vehicle accidents, can also cause TBI.



Early intervention can make a big difference in the treatment of these injuries. Some of the symptoms of TBI include trouble with memory, attention or concentration; difficulty making decisions or organizing daily tasks; changes in behavior; vision or hearing difficulties; and a sensitivity to sounds, lights or distractions.

Some symptoms may be present immediately while others may appear much later. Many returning veterans don't even realize they have an injury. Talk to your health care provider right away about any troubling symptoms or problems.

If you are a veteran of Iraq or Afghanistan, and may have been affected by a brain injury, you can contact the Northeast Veterans with TBI Project at (617) 204-3852 for assistance. The Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission's statewide head injury program was awarded a three-year federal grant, which focuses on improving access to community services and support for Veterans who have sustained a traumatic brain injury. ★

**Veterans of Iraq or Afghanistan may contact
the Northeast Veterans with TBI Project at (617) 204-3852.**

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Massachusetts Guard to Hold Special Forces Orientation Program, April 11-13



The Soldier that thinks he can and the one that thinks he can't are both right. Which one are you? The Soldiers of the Army's Special Forces, also known as the Green Berets, make up a unique, unconventional combat arms organization. Warfare today has new rules and calls for a different type of Soldier. If you possess boundless ideas and creativity, and you always think of new ways to organize and strategize, the Special Forces orientation program is the place to show your mettle.

The Special Forces orientation program is held twice a year, in April and October, by Company C, 1st Battalion, 20th Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Springfield. The SFOP is designed to identify those Soldiers who are best suited and qualified to attend Special Forces Assessment & Selection and the Special Forces Qualification Course at Fort Bragg, N.C.

Candidate assessment is based on a thorough, rigorous and objective testing process. SFOP is designed to be physically and mentally strenuous, so candidates should be well-prepared as they will face a demanding schedule and a series of challenging events in various environmental conditions.

All candidates must be male volunteers able to score 70 percent in each event of the Army Physical Fitness Test in the 17-21 age group. Noncommissioned officers must be Staff Sgt. (E-6) or below; currently hold, or be eligible for, a "Secret" security clearance; and possess a GT score of 100 or higher. Candidates who hold the rank of Sgt. 1st Class (E-7) will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Officers must be 2nd Lt. (O-1) through Capt. (O-3); have served, or are serving, as a platoon leader; are enrolled in, or have completed, the Officer Basic Course; and currently hold, or be eligible for, a "Secret" security clearance.

The next SFOP will begin at 8 p.m., April 11, at 1505 Roosevelt Ave. in Springfield. Current Massachusetts Army Guard members interested in attending should contact Staff Sgt. Surreia at (508) 233-7943 or Staff Sgt. Jajko at (508) 233-7941. Members of other branches of the military who are interested should contact Sgt. 1st Class Fennyery, Special Forces Recruiter, at (413) 246-9329 or dan.fennyery@us.army.mil.

We won't make any promises, but we guarantee you'll be challenged. ★

182nd Sappers Clear the Way

By 182nd Engineer Company

The 182nd Engineer Company continues its important and dangerous work clearing improvised explosive devices in Iraq. The Sappers recently awarded the Combat Action Badge to Sgt. 1st Class David Henry, Cpl. William Kent, Spc. Duanne Danforth and Spc. Thiago Miranda for their actions on Sept. 22, 2007.

These Soldiers were part of a route clearance patrol when their vehicle was struck by an IED. The crews of all the vehicles remained calm and professional while performing all assigned tasks, such as focusing on possible trigger men and looking for secondary IEDs. Thankfully, all Soldiers of the 182nd returned safely to their Forward Operating Base.

Their actions that day were in keeping with the finest traditions of military heroism and reflected great credit upon each of them, the 182nd Engineer Company, the 1203rd Engineer Battalion and the United States Army. ★



Members of the 182nd Engineer Company (Sappers) in Iraq. Photo: Courtesy of 182nd Engineer Company

Charity Drive for Iraqi Families

By 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

The Soldiers of the 65th Public Affairs Operations Center in Iraq have recently completed a charity drive to benefit the families of Iraq. The 65th PAOC asked family and friends to donate clothing and toys for the families of Iraq from Nov. 15, 2007 to Jan. 1, 2008.

"We did it, we reached the goal" announced Lt. Col. Chuck Perenick, commander of the 65th. During the 45 days of collection, a goal of two tons was set and that goal was broken by the first week in January.

The Combined Press Information Center in Baghdad was the collection site for items shipped from family and friends in the U.S. Perenick started the collection by contacting his immediate family and asking for items for the Iraqi children. Since then other Soldiers within the 65th have asked their families to do the same.

"The biggest contributor to date is the Charles F. Brown School in Needham, Mass.," Perenick said. "Jeffrey Primeau, a teacher at the school, got the football players and students involved and that was what sent us over the top. What impresses me the most about the people who take time to donate is both the quality of what is donated combined with the fact that they pay for the shipping out of their own pockets."



From left to right, Maj. Randall Church, Master Sgt. Pallas Debettencourt, Sgt. Maj. Domenic DiNatale and Lt. Col. Chuck Perenick, stand behind items donated for Iraqi families. Photo: Sgt. Jerry Saslav, 65th Public Affairs Operations Center

Maj. Randall Church, of Rhode Island, Master Sgt. Pallas Debettencourt and Sgt. Maj. Domenic Dinatale have all taken the donation drive up a notch by involving more family and friends, as well as business and fraternal organizations.

"Our new goal is now a total of 10 tons of donations before we leave country," said Perenick.

You may send all items to Lt. Col. Chuck Perenick, PAO MNFI (CPIC), APO AE 09316. ★

Carrying on the Traditions of the First Corps of Cadets

By Leonid Kondratiuk

The First Corps of Cadets has a long and distinguished history spanning 267 years of service. Units carrying the lineage of the First Corps have served as the governor's bodyguard, an elite infantry battalion, an engineer regiment in World War I, anti-aircraft artillery in World War II and, since 1945, as a cavalry squadron, infantry battalion and signal battalion. Since 1996, the 211th Military Police Battalion in Lexington has proudly continued on the great traditions of the First Corps.

In a historical precedent to its current mission, the First Corps served as military police in New Bern, N.C., from January to April, 1863, as the 45th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry in the Civil War. The 45th was organized from the Cadets in September 1862, for nine months service in the Union enclave on the coast of North Carolina.

In July 2003, the 211th Military Police Battalion and the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment were engaged in a series of firefights in and around Fallujah, Iraq. For its collective gallantry in action, the 211th was awarded the Valorous Unit Citation; the first ever awarded to a Massachusetts Army National Guard unit.

While unit designations and missions may change, the 211th has had a continuous record of service to colony, Commonwealth and nation since 1741. ★

Night at the Pops



Chief Warrant Officer 2 Lawrence E. Waters Jr. takes a bow after leading the Boston Pops in a rousing rendition of "Sleigh Ride" during the Boston Pops Christmas concert last December. Photo: Courtesy of the Boston Pops

Troops Bring the Holidays to Baghdad

The Forward Operating Base Freedom holiday light display created by Staff Sgt. James Aaron of the 972nd Military Police Company stood as a symbol of Christmas in Iraq.



Spc. Matthew Haslett distributes stockings filled with gifts to Soldiers in his platoon. The stockings were sent as a joint effort from the 972nd Military Police Company's Family Readiness Group and the Merrimack Valley Military Family Support Group.

Soldiers of the 972nd Military Police Company celebrate the New Year just after the stroke of midnight on Forward Operating Base Freedom in Iraq.



Story and photos by 1st Lt. Kristopher Jong, 972nd Military Police Company

Everyone knew when the 972nd Military Police Company deployed to Iraq that they would miss birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and other special events. Some Soldiers would even miss

the birth of a child. During the holiday season, when most individuals spend time with their families, the 972nd was performing missions in Iraq. This made it especially hard for both the Soldiers and their families.

To help lift their spirits, Soldiers of the 972nd

decided to bring the holidays to Baghdad. The Family Readiness Group, veteran's organizations and others mobilized themselves and sent lights, ornaments and other festive decorations to transform Forward Operating Base Freedom into a winter wonderland. Staff Sgt. James Aaron designed and constructed a holiday light display with a wooden frame and lights in the shape of a Christmas tree. The 972nd's parent unit, the 211th Military Police Battalion, also sent a Christmas tree, complete with ornaments and lights, in the mail, which was displayed in the dining facility.

Another staple of the holiday season is good food. The Soldiers of the 972nd were served a special Thanksgiving meal in the dining facility featuring traditional turkey, cranberry sauce and prime rib. Sgt. 1st Class William Logue, Spc. Tammy Macha, Sgt. John Jones and Spc. Montiveale Cortorez worked tirelessly to ensure that the meals were served promptly and that the dining facility was transformed into a cozy kitchen for the Soldiers. Special meals were also prepared for Christmas and New Year's Eve.

There was no shortage of presents and packages for the Soldiers of the 972nd. Soldiers received packages from many different organizations, including "Operation Take a Soldier to the Movies," AnySoldier.com and the unit's FRG. The FRG, in concert with the Merrimack Valley Military Family Support Group, sent a stocking full of gifts to each Soldier, while "Operation Take a Soldier to the Movies" sent a DVD, microwave popcorn and candy to each service member.

On New Year's Eve, the company hosted a spectacular barbecue for the entire FOB. The unit broke out the grills and cooked steaks, hamburgers and hot dogs during a party that lasted through the evening. Spc. Gerald Martin prepared a countdown that was projected onto a big screen as the stroke of midnight was eagerly anticipated. The countdown was immediately followed by a polar plunge where Soldiers dived into the pool in celebration of the New Year. Among the Soldiers taking the polar plunge were the commander, Capt. Bryan Pillai; the executive officer, 1st Lt. Kristopher Jong; and the first sergeant, 1st Sgt. Steven J. Buccheri. The three platoon leaders, 1st Lt. David Falvey, 2nd Lt. Christopher Cunningham and 2nd Lt. Philip Kucha, also participated.

Although the Soldiers of the 972nd MP Company are away from home for the holidays, they are still focused on their mission. Sgt. 1st Class Michael Hickey said, "It's hard being away from my wife and daughter, but knowing that we're making a difference here makes it a little easier. By doing what we're doing, we're making Iraq safer, which makes it safer back home for our families as well." ★

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